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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00

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S E C R E T NAIROBI 3853

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER TRIP TO AFRICA: BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON
PRESIDENT KENYATTA

REF STATE 095877

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH ON PRESIDENT KENYATTA REQUESTED IN REFTEL
PROVIDED BELOW:

A) PRESIDENT KENYATTA, KENYA'S FIRST AND ONLY HEAD OF
STATE, ENJOYS AN UNCHALLENGED POSITION DOMESTICALLY AND
IS REGARDED THROUGHOUT AFRICA AS LEADING FIGURE IN
STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIALISM. HOWEVER, HIS REPUTATION
IS SOMEWHAT TARNISHED BY ACQUISITIVENESS OF HIS FAMILY
AND CLOSE POLITICAL ASSOCIATES, AS WELL AS HIS RECENT
MOVES TO SILENCE PARLIAMENTARY CRITICS. BECAUSE KENYATTA
HAS NOT TRAVELLED ABROAD SINCE EARLY 1960'S HIS CONTACT
WITH OTHER AFRICAN CHIEFS OF STATE HAS BEEN QUITE LIMITED.
OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS HE HAS HAD MOST FREQUENT VISITS
FROM PRESIDENTS NYERERE, AMIN, AND KAUNDA. HE IS REPORTED
TO ENJOY ESPECIALLY WARM RELATIONSHIP WITH KAUNDA
WHOSE IDEAS OFTEN PARALLEL HIS OWN, WHILE HE HAS
RECENTLY FALLEN OUT WITH AMIN. IN GENERAL, NOT CLOSE
PERSONALLY WITH OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS.

B) KENYATTA IS SHORT AND STOCKY BUT MOVES ABOUT WITH
A VITALITY WHICH BELIES FACT HE IS IN HIS MID-80'S.
IN LATE FEBRUARY MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR (NAIROBI 1811),
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KENYATTA DESPLAYED SHARP INSIGHT AND PRESENTED HIS

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ARGUMENTS IN ARTICULATE AND FORTHRIGHT MANNER. AT TIMES HE IS PRONE TO BIBLICAL OR HISTORICAL ANALOGIES. KENYATTA IS BUSINESSLIKE AND ADMIRES A FRANK, TO-THE-POINT APPROACH.

C) KENYATTA HOLDS CONSERVATIVE AND PRAGMATIC VIEWS ON MOST ISSUES. IS GENERALLY INWARD LOOKING, FOCUSING HIS ATTENTION--AND KENYA'S POLICIES--ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH STRONG EMPHASIS ON AGRICULTURE. MOST CONCERNED WITH THOSE EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH RELATE TO KENYA ECONOMICALLY. HAS PLAYED PASSIVE--MAINLY RHETORICAL--ROLE ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES. IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN VERY DISAPPOINTED AT FAILURE OF HIS 1975 MEDIATION EFFORTS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE UNITY SOLUTION AMONG THE THREE ANGOLAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS (KENYA HAS STILL NOT RECOGNIZED MPLA). KENYATTA HAS HIGHLY FAVORABLE VIEW OF U.S. AND AMERICAN SOCIETY (DAUGHTER IS RECENT U.S. UNIVERSITY GRADUATE AS ARE MANY KENYAN LEADERS INCLUDING MINISTERS KOINANGE AND KIANO AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER MUNGAI). KENYATTA STUDIED BRIEFLY IN USSR IN 1930'S; HE IS WARY OF SOVIET INTENTIONS AND KENYA'S RELATIONS WITH USSR AND OTHER COMMUNIST STATES ARE BEST CHARACTERIZED AS CORRECT BUT NOT CORDIAL. KENYA HAS NO RELATIONS WITH CUBA. DESPITE BITTER STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE (AND HIS NINE YEARS OF IMPRISONMENT AND DETENTION), KENYATTA RETAINS HIS LIFE LONG STRONG ATTACHMENT TO UK WHERE HE WORKED AND STUDIED FOR 17 YEARS (1929-1946).

D) KENYATTA HAS DIRECT AND FRANK APPROACH IN NEGO-TIATIONS. HAS TENDENCY TO SIMPLIFY COMPLEX ISSUES AND AVOID LENGTHY DETAILED DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL POINTS. DURING CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGNERS, KENYATTA SOMETIMES ENGAGES IN SIDE EXCHANGES WITH ADVISERS IN TRIBAL LANGUAGE (KIKUYU).
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